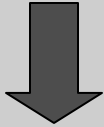


# THE PLACER

A Voice of History

Nov - Dec 2008  
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## In this Issue

1. Administrator's Notes
2. Entertainment
3. Entertainment
4. Museums  
Intelligence
5. County Organization  
News
6. Historical  
Organizations/  
Artifact Highlight
7. Calendar of Events

Melanie Barton, Museums Admin.  
Placer County Museums Division  
101 Maple St.  
Auburn, CA 95603  
(530) 889-6500  
[mbarton@placer.ca.gov](mailto:mbarton@placer.ca.gov)

Michael Otten, President  
Placer County Historical Society  
PO Box 5643  
Auburn, CA 95604  
[www.placercountyhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.placercountyhistoricalsociety.org)

Editor and Staff Writer:  
Ralph Gibson  
(530) 889-6502  
[rgibson@placer.ca.gov](mailto:rgibson@placer.ca.gov)  
[www.placer.ca.gov/museums](http://www.placer.ca.gov/museums)

## Administrator's Notes

*Melanie Barton*

This is the last issue of *The Placer* for 2008. Our theme for this last year has been "*The variety of businesses and social institutions that were rapidly built in Placer County after the discovery of gold presented opportunities for people to connect and for communities to grow.*" Every issue has had a different topic that represented places that were (and still are) points of contact within the community. The topic for this edition is Entertainment and Recreation. From dance halls, opera and local celebrations to baseball games, fishing, and skiing, Placer County has always been a very engaging place to live.

Another place where people probably connected was at county fairs and, perhaps, traveling merry-go-rounds. For several years I have wanted to exhibit a private collection of hand carved carousel animals. The stumbling block has been that we had no documentation that carousels, or merry-go-rounds as they were commonly called, were ever set up in our communities even though it was very common in the later part of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century & early 20<sup>th</sup> Century for merry-go-rounds to move from town to town somewhat like traveling circuses.

This year, thanks to the research of Carmel Barry-Schweyer and the volunteers at the Archives and

Research Center, we've had a break through. A photograph of a merry-go-round located in Towle was donated to the Golden Drift Historical Society in June 2007. The animals on the carousel are typical of the "County Fair Style". In addition, several articles from *The Placer Herald* in 1906 confirm that there were merry-go-rounds in our area.

*T.H. McKenna has just returned to Lincoln from Abilene, Kan., where he went to purchase a merry go round, in which business he will shortly engage... Upon the arrival of the merry go round from the East it will be given its initial run in Lincoln, after which the firm will visit various other points in this State, Oregon and Idaho.*  
*Placer Herald, March 31, 1906*

From an article on May 12, 1906 we learn that a "steam merry-go-round" was installed in Auburn on a vacant lot next to W.R. Arthur's residence and was expected to remain for a week. The following article is priceless:

*Miss Effa Lardner last Saturday evening received the handsome gold watch given away by the merry-go-round proprietors, the watch being awarded to the young lady receiving the highest number of votes during their stay in Auburn.*

*Placer Herald, May 26, 1906*

Plans are now underway to exhibit the collection of carousel animals at the Bernhard Museum Winery in December. I would be very interested to hear from you if you have first hand knowledge of traveling merry-go-rounds in the county.

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Carmel Barry-Schweyer, Placer County Museums Curator of Archives, is retiring on December 5<sup>th</sup>. Carmel has been an invaluable part of our museums team. Due to her dedication and leadership, the Archives and Research Center has become a significant asset to the county and to researchers across the nation. She has been an important member of our Exhibit Team providing research for all our displays and exhibits. Please join us in wishing Carmel the very best on her retirement.♥

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## **Gold Rush Era Entertainment and Recreation**

*Carmel Barry-Schweyer*

A ladies hat found on the trail near Auburn caused a hilarious celebration in the days of '49. Miners gathered for miles around and hoisted the hat on a pole and danced and cavorted around it for three days! The population of Placer County consisted of nearly 10,000 men between 20 and 30 years old--entertainment and recreation was automatic.

Common forms of entertainment for early miners included bull and bear fights, baseball, circuses, concerts, picnics, recitals, orations, and holiday celebrations. Auburn also

offered roller skating and bowling.

Miners celebrated the 4<sup>th</sup> of July in grand fashion throughout the mining camps. The *Placer Herald* reported a huge celebration in Horseshoe Bar in 1852. The miners there decided to erect a 100 foot flagpole so that all of the miners up and down the river could see it for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. They asked Mrs. Sarah Capson Smyth, the 15 year old wife of one of the miners and the only woman in the area, to sew the flag. The celebration began with a torchlight procession from Smiths Point to Whiskey Bar where they forded the river and were met by miners from Rattlesnake Bar, Kentucky Bar, Oregon Bar, Granite Bar, Dolan's Bar, Long Bar, Milk Punch Bar, Smith's Bar, and Negro Hill. Five thousand men formed the line, marched down the American River and around the flag pole at Horseshoe Bar. Mrs. Smyth was called on to give a toast with a glass of wine. Confused for a moment, she then held up the glass and said, "The Flag of our Union, long may it be the hope of the oppressed and home of the free." She then spilled the wine and the flag was hoisted slowly to the top of the pole while a band of 11 miners played The Star Spangled Banner. They had a large barbeque and festivities and at 3:00 in the morning, all who were able to walk, started back with their lit torches parading to their home camps.

Bull & Bear fights provided lively entertainment and attracted large crowds early in the Gold Rush, however by 1854 both the

*Placer Press* and the *Placer Herald* newspapers of Auburn reported that they were not well attended by "citizens of this city." Both papers objected to this "disgusting amusement" and John Gwynn wrote a letter to the editor opposing the event, especially since it was held on the Sabbath. The fights were held across the ravine and on the hill opposite the Placer Herald building. (The location was where the current Court View Apartments are located).

Baseball games between mining camps, and later communities, became a very popular form of recreation. As early as 1875 Auburn had the Auroras, the Juniors and the Blue Caps, while Rocklin had the Red Jackets and Penryn formed a ball club. By 1900 nearly every community had at least one baseball team.

The International Bowling Saloon with a bar, located on Main Street Auburn in 1852, had a thriving business. During the 1850s the Armory had a roller skating rink inside. (The Armory was located next to Bootleggers.)

In 1852 the Mechanics Hall located on Washington Street hosted The Alleghanians who put on a musical program with music and old songs. In May of 1854 The Mountaineers gave a concert with duets and a quartet in the Courthouse for only \$2.00. In 1855 the Backus Minstrels performed at the Empire Hotel and the California Minstrels at the Orleans Hotel.

George Stephens hired H.T. Holmes to construct a three story

brick building for a theatre in 1856. The theatre building was a 112 ft. long two story building, with the first floor intended for a bowling alley and billiard saloon, second floor for the theatre and the third story bedrooms. The stage occupied 25 ft. and that left a space of 66 ft. by 39 ft. for the audience. There was 20 ft. in the front for a saloon. Stephens named his establishment the American Hotel. During 1856, Holmes also converted the second floor of his fireproof brick building on Washington Street into a theatre or concert room.

The American Hotel had a Grand Opening Ball and the Empire Hotel, rebuilt after the 1855 fire, also had a Grand Opening Ball. Everybody was invited. Music was furnished by the Cotillion Band consisting of horns and violins. The Odd Fellows and Masons often gave balls and big social affairs.

The American Hotel theatre hosted a Grand Magic Performance. The "European Wizard Delphino assisted by Madame Delphino performed the feat of sleeping in the AIR in a horizontal position." The price to see this amazing feat was only \$1.00.


Auburn had a lot dedicated to the circus known as the Circus Lot located on Sacramento Street. The North American Circus with J. Alexander, agent, arrived in Auburn with equestrians and clowns, the price only \$2.00 in the box and \$1.00 in the pit. In 1855, Lee & Marshalls National Circus with clowns & jesters and horse acts came to Auburn. Also

the National Circus and Hippodrome came to town with many unusual acts and after performing here went down and performed at Rattlesnake Bar. Rowes Pioneer Circus came to town with a Slack Rope Performer & Vaulter, Perch & Acrobat Performers, American Hercules & Cannon Ball Performer, Indian Rubber Man, and a Chinese Juggler & Shakespearean Clown. The price was box-\$2.00, pit-\$1.00. These circuses traveled to places like Pine Grove, Auburn, Yankee Jims, Rattlesnake Bar, Todd's Valley, Michigan City, Wisconsin Hill, Iowa Hill, and Gold Hill.

Recreation and entertainment in the early years of the Gold Rush was spontaneous. As the mining camps became more stable communities, organized activities like balls, theatre performances, and the circus became very popular.♠



Damascus Baseball Team



**NATIONAL CIRCUS**  
AND  
**HIPPODROME!**

MESSRS. LEE & MARSHALL, duly appreciating the flattering reception heretofore extended them by the citizens of this city, desire to announce that their arrangements for the present season far outstrip, in NOVELTY, SPLENDOR AND VARIETY, anything ever before presented to a California audience. They are happy to announce an engagement with the renowned

**FRENCH TROUPE!**  
Late of Francoini's Hippodrome, Paris, who make their debut before a California audience, in an entirely new

**GRAND ENTREE,**  
by twelve ladies and gentlemen, led by Madame Austin and H. C. Lee.

**TIGHT ROPE DANCING,**  
By Mad. Austin,

**LA PERCHE,**  
By the Italian Brothers,

**GYMNASTIC FEATS,**  
**DOUBLE TRAPEZ,**  
**GLOBE RUNNING,**  
**TUMBLING,**  
**VAULTING, etc.**

**THREE CLOWNS:** Mons. Austin, Mons. Codona and the old favorite, J. B. Rochette, will enliven the entertainments.

This company will perform in  
**AUBURN,** on Friday and Saturday, the 4th and 5th of May.  
**YANKEE JIM'S,** on Sunday, 6th of May;  
**TODD'S VALLEY,** on Monday, 7th "  
**MICHIGAN CITY,** on Tuesday, 8th "  
**WISCONSIN HILL,** Wednesday, 9th "  
**IOWA HILL,** Thursday & Friday, 10th & 11th.

Admission—Boxes \$2.00; Parquette, \$1.00.  
Doors open at 7 o'clock, performance to commence at 7½.

R. J. TIFFANY, Agent.  
Auburn, April 28, 2w

National Circus  
advertisement that appeared  
in the Placer Herald





## Museums Intelligence

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### Placer County Museums News

*Ralph Gibson*

The leaves are beginning to pile up in my backyard and the Halloween decorations have been out for a couple of weeks now. We're in the middle of fall and winter is not far behind. Will it be a wet and snowy winter this year? We all hope so, but one thing we know for sure is that it will be a busy season for us in the museums. Fall Living History is now behind us, but volunteer Training continues. We're also adding four new locations to our *History on the Go* exhibit in the Placer County Museum in the Courthouse. This time we're focusing on the locations of four famous movies that were shot in Placer County. Silent classics *Gold Rush* and *Greed* and more modern films *Godfather II* and *Phenomenon* are highlighted in the exhibit. The exhibit will be installed before November 1<sup>st</sup>.

The Courthouse remodel is going well. By the time you receive this newsletter, the first floor where museum spaces are located should have a fresh coat of paint. The Courthouse is slated to reopen sometime this winter.

As winter creeps closer our thoughts turn to pine bows, garland, and a jolly fat man in a red suit. It's time to start thinking of gifts and stocking stuffers. We all have our strategy for fighting through the holiday shopping crowds, but I have a tip for all of you. Come by the Placer County Museum Gift Shop and check out their wide selection of books, jewelry, and trinkets. I think you'll find that perfect gift or that great stocking stuffer in our gift shop. The bonus is that you don't have to fight the crowds.

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### Community Education Program: Victorian Christmas Crafts

Learn how to make your own Victorian Christmas card! Join us in the Bernhard Museum Winery on Saturday, November 15<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 p.m. where you can make your own Victorian Christmas card. This program is kid-friendly and perfect for the whole family! Placer County Museums Docent Aziza Parker will guide you through this fun hands-on activity. The program will last approximately two hours. You get to keep the card and the program is FREE!

The Bernhard Museum is located at 291 Auburn-Folsom Rd. in Auburn. Because materials are limited, reservations are required for each participant.

### Victorian Christmas at the Bernhard Museum

Catch a glimpse of Christmas Past! The Placer County Museums invites you to join us for a bit of Victorian Christmas Cheer at the Bernhard Museum. The museum

will be dressed in Victorian Christmas splendor from December 2<sup>nd</sup> through the Holidays and is open Tuesday through Sunday 11:00 am to 4:00 pm. Stop by and learn the history behind some of our most cherished Christmas traditions. Admission is FREE! If you plan to bring a group of eight or more, please call us ahead of time to make reservations.

You can also visit us during Auburn's Old Town Country Christmas celebration on December 11<sup>th</sup> from 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm and enjoy a cup of hot apple cider and fresh baked cookies! For more information on any of these events, please call 530-889-6500.♣

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### Placer County Historical Society News



#### President's Message

*Michael Otten,  
President*

Passing by the historic Placer County Courthouse, now nearing the end of an expensive and extensive waterproofing and swallow-proofing operation, one's eye catches on the quaint 15-foot high fountain at the corner where Maple Street and Auburn-Folsom Road come together.

While some may have thought it was a remnant of the time that the Women Christian Temperance Union put up fountains across the country in front of saloons to keep the men folk away from demon rum, it was actually a gift a century ago from one of Placer County's most distinguished citizens. He was Jacob Hart Neff (Oct. 18, 1830-March 26, 1909). He was a "49er" who came West in the Gold Rush, made a fortune and decided in 1908 to donate a lighted fountain to water people (from tin



cups) and horses of persons who came to the seat of county government to do business.

Ironically, it marked the beginning of the end of one era and the start of another. The year 1908 is remembered as when Judge James E. Prewett became the first resident with an automobile, a tiller-steered, belt-driven Holsman. His honor would occasionally need help from some able-bodied gentlemen pushing his big-wheeled, open-aired putt-putt up the hill out of Old Town. (October 1908 is also remembered as the year Henry Ford (a one-time visitor to Auburn) rolled out his first Model T).

Methinks, it would be a fitting project to restore the lights and water to the Neff Fountain and put together a biography of this early pioneer who somehow failed to garner even an honorable mention in the Auburn Journal Centennial 20 years ago of "Those Who Made Memories." But then again, there was no mention of the longtime jurist Prewett or the city's arguably most-famous resident, Jean Baptiste Charbonneau, the youngest member of the Lewis and Clark expedition.

Neff not only had large mining interests here, including in the Millertown, Iowa Hill and Colfax areas, but he served in the state Senate and was California's 22<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Governor after losing a bid to become state Treasurer in 1886. Neff was a delegate to the 1908 Republican National convention, served as Sheriff of Illinoistown, served for many years as president of the California Mining Association, was a Regent of the University of California and also served a term as State Prison Commissioner among other things. The former Neff home in Colfax is part of that city's great walking tour.

Kudos to Gene Lorance and In-N-Out Burger for their efforts toward establishing a memorial marker at the site of the family home of Dr. John C. Hawver, a dentist best known for bringing to light more than a century ago a rich cache of fossils that date back more than five million years.

The now-named Hawver Cave on the El Dorado County side of the American River near the confluence has been getting a lot of attention lately thanks to the work of Lorance, who became the project manager for the caves while working as an environmental resource specialist for State Parks.

Now, he is working with the Hawver descendents and the restaurant on a book. The Hawver home and most of the trees that concealed its presence from most passersby are gone to make way for an expanded parking lot and drive through for the popular restaurant. Lorance and the restaurant are working on locating a large limestone rock from the quarry near the cave for a large memorial to Hawver that will be placed at the parking lot. Though the house may date back 128 years, because of the extensive renovations made over the years, city officials and others had long written off any worth to restoring it.

Interestingly enough, the boarded-up house was still occupied when In-N-Out began its demolition work last month. The occupant was credited with being a good housekeeper who kept the beds made and the place well swept and used a 10-speed bicycle for transportation. She was described as a homeless woman who called herself "Tarantula." To learn more about Hawver and his cave visit the Placer County Museum in the Courthouse or the natural history museum at Sierra College.

Finally, if interested in serving on the PCHS nominating committee, board or just want to help work on projects, please contact me. ♦

--Michael Otten, [otten@ssctv.net](mailto:otten@ssctv.net)

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## Placer County Historical Society Dinner Meeting

Addah Owens, Vice President

**When:** December 4, 2008

**Time:** 6:30 Dinner, 7:30

Program

**Where:** Veteran's Memorial Hall, 100 East St., Auburn, CA

**Cost:** \$13 per person

**Menu:** Roast Baron of Beef, Scalloped Potatoes, Green Bean Casserole, Salad, Rolls and Dessert

**Mail Check to:** PCHS, c/o Betty Samson, 8780 Baxter Grade Road, Auburn, CA 95603.

**Program:** This is a portion of the letter I received from Lt. Col. John Charles Fremont:

*My Dear Mrs. Owens, It is with great pride and pleasure that I accept your kind invitation to speak to your wonderful Historical Society about my small part in bringing California into the greatest Political Union which mankind has been blessed with...myself and Mrs. Fremont will modify our itinerary to include your most august society as special guests. I shall be glad to express to your audience some of the events in the liberation of California which took us into the newly formed county of Placer and the town of Auburn as well as the need for Congress to accept our newly written Constitution, as a free state, I might add...Thank you once again for your very kind invitation and I look forward to spending an evening with*

*all of you. Lt. Col J.C.  
Fremont, October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1849,  
Monterey, California.*

Rex Ruth is a native of California, who resides in Auburn with his wife Janna. They have five children and three grandchildren.

Rex is a docent at the California State Gold Discovery Park in Coloma and has been a part of the docent program for eight years. He has also belonged to the Old Sacramento Living History Program and has worked closely with the Highway 50 Wagon Train.

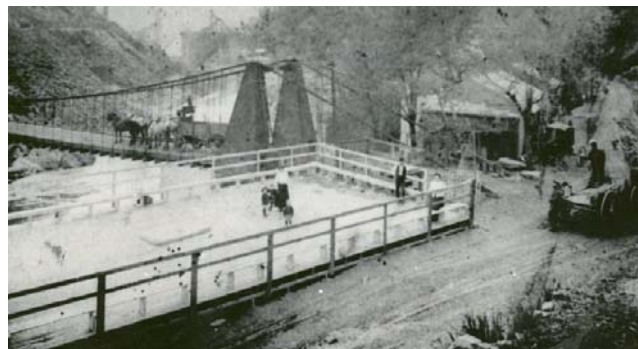
He has spoken to audiences as Noah Webster, President Polk, the Rev. Aaron Cool, California's first Senator, William M. Gwin, and John Charles Fremont, the Great Explorer. He has also spoken to public, political and religious audiences and has received wide acclaim. ♦



4<sup>th</sup> of July Celebration at Last Chance,  
Placer County in 1895



Rea Hotel Dance Floor in Foresthill



North Fork American River Bridge Dance Floor in 1863

## Placer County Historical Organizations

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Colfax Area Historical Society  
George Lay, (530) 878-1927  
PO Box 185  
Colfax, CA 95713-0185  
[www.colfaxhistory.org](http://www.colfaxhistory.org)

Foresthill Divide Historical  
Society  
Troy Simester,  
(530) 367-3535  
PO Box 1175  
Foresthill, CA 95631  
[www.foresthillhistory.org](http://www.foresthillhistory.org)

Friends of Griffith Quarry  
Cliff Kennedy, (916) 663-2122  
PO Box 10  
Penryn, CA 95663-0326

Golden Drift Historical Society  
Doug Ferrier, (530) 389-2617  
PO Box 20  
Dutch Flat, CA 95714-0020

Historical Advisory Board  
Donna Coffman, (530) 889-6500  
101 Maple St. Rm. 104  
Auburn, CA 95603

Joss House Museum and  
Chinese History Center  
Charles Allen  
PO Box 9126  
Auburn, CA 95603  
(530) 878-4602

Lincoln Highway Association  
Robert Dietrich, (916) 962-1428  
P.O. Box 2554  
Fair Oaks, CA 95628-2554  
[www.lincolnhwy.org](http://www.lincolnhwy.org)

Loomis Basin Historical  
Society Alice Barnes,  
(916) 652-7844  
PO Box 2195  
Loomis, CA 95659-2195  
[www.ppgn.com](http://www.ppgn.com)

Maidu Interpretive Center  
Kristie Stevens,  
(916) 774-5934  
1960 Johnson Ranch Drive  
Roseville, CA 95661  
[www.roseville.ca.us/indianmuseum](http://www.roseville.ca.us/indianmuseum)

Newcastle Portuguese Hall  
Association  
Aileen Gage, (530) 885-9113  
PO Box 993, 690 Taylor Rd.  
Newcastle, CA 95658

Placer County Historical  
Society  
Michael Otten, (530) 888-7837  
PO Box 5643  
Auburn, CA 95604  
[www.placercountyhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.placercountyhistoricalsociety.org)

Placer County Genealogical  
Society  
Jerry Unruh, (530) 887-2646  
PO Box 7385  
Auburn, CA 95604  
[www.pcgenes.com](http://www.pcgenes.com)

Rocklin Historical Society  
Carol Powell (916) 435-4604  
History Museum  
(916) 624-3464  
PO Box 1  
Rocklin, CA 95677-0752  
[www.rocklinhistory.org](http://www.rocklinhistory.org)

Roseville Historical Society  
(916) 773-3003  
557 Lincoln St.  
Roseville, CA 95678  
[www.rosevillehistorical.org](http://www.rosevillehistorical.org)

### Artifact Highlight

*Kasia Woroniecka*

#### Trumps Card Box

One of the oldest and most popular entertainments that man has invented is the playing of cards. This tiny box, which dates back to 1880, measures only 3 cm. in length and 2cm. in width and contains suits used in the trick-taking game called Trumps. The small cards are used in determining which card suit will be elevated above its normal rank to become the trump suit. It developed from an older game called Ruff and Honours and is also known by a variety of names like Knock-out Whist, Reduction Whist and Rat. The name of the game derives from the Middle English *trumpen*, which means to deceive, cheat. Trumps was very popular in the United States in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. It was replaced by Bridge, which shares many traits with Whist.♠



## Calendar of Events

### November

- Nov. 15<sup>th</sup>, 1:00 pm** Community Education Program: *Victorian Christmas Crafts* at the Bernhard Museum Winery. Reservations required. Contact: (530) 889-6500.
- Nov. 17<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 pm** Foresthill Divide Historical Society Business meeting at the Foresthill Divide Museum. Contact (530) 367-3535.
- Nov. 17<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 pm** Rocklin Historical Society meeting at the Rocklin Library. Contact (916) 624-3464.
- Nov. 19<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 pm** Loomis Basin Historical Society meeting at the Loomis Library. Contact (916) 652-7844.

### December

- Dec. 2<sup>nd</sup>, 11:00 am** Bernhard Museum decorated for Victorian Christmas. Contact: (530) 889-6500.
- Dec. 4<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 pm** Placer County Historical Society Dinner meeting at the Veteran's Memorial Hall. Cost is \$13 per person. Contact Betty Samson 530-885-5074.
- Dec. 11<sup>th</sup>, 5:00 pm** *Victorian Christmas at the Bernhard Museum* during Old Town's Country Christmas. Contact: (530) 889-6500
- Dec. 15<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 pm** Foresthill Divide Historical Society Potluck meeting at the Foresthill Memorial Hall. Contact (530) 367-3535.
- Dec. 15<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 pm** Rocklin Historical Society meeting at the Rocklin Library. Contact (916) 624-3464.
- Dec. 17<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 pm** Loomis Basin Historical Society meeting at the Loomis Library. Contact (916) 652-7844.
- Dec. 17<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 pm** Historical Advisory Board Meeting in the Bernhard Museum Winery. Contact: (530) 889-6500.
- Dec. 22<sup>nd</sup> & 23<sup>rd</sup>** Free Holiday Museum Days at the Maidu Interpretive Center. Docent led trail tour from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm, and Native stories from 11:30 am to 2:30 pm. Contact: (916) 774-5934.